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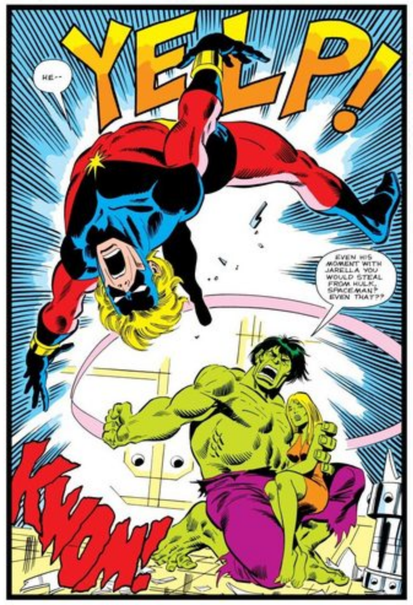
FIORELLI
SÁNCHEZ-ALMARA

DOCTOR STRANGE

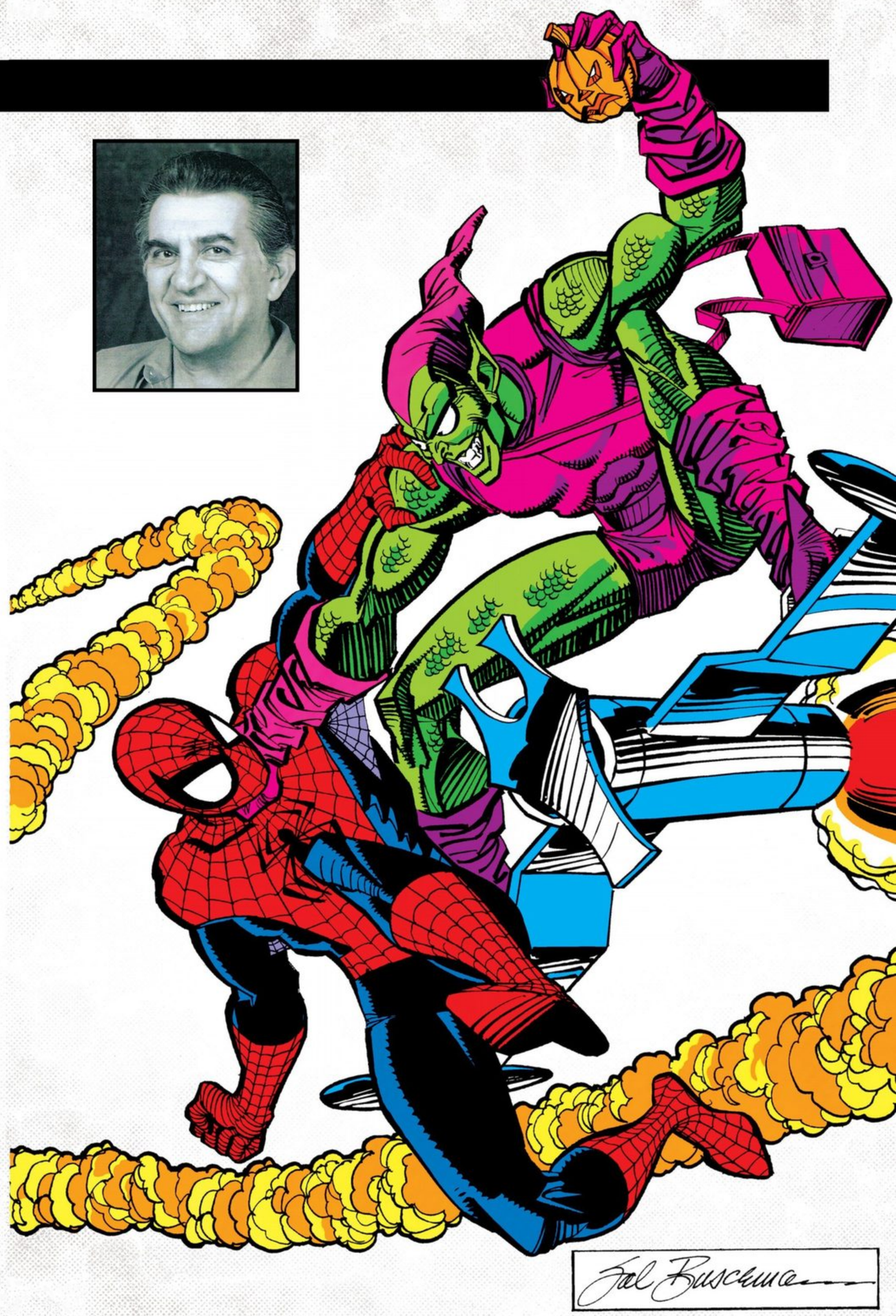
RATED T+

HORLEY

SAL BUSCEMA
1936-2026



Marvel pauses to remember Sal Buscema, a foundational Marvel artist since 1969. Buscema was a prolific penciler and inker, working on nearly every Marvel character. His clear, dynamic storytelling was a feature of long, historic runs on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Incredible Hulk* and *Rom*. Buscema was famed for drawing bombastic roundhouse punches that sent characters sprawling across the page, but he could also be capable of great subtlety and emotion in his character acting. "Our Pal Sal" will be missed by generations of Marvel fans.



STEPHEN STRANGE was a pre-eminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a magical cure. Instead, he found a mysterious wizard called the Ancient One, who taught him the mystic arts and opened his eyes to the magic behind reality. Seeking power to defeat Doctor Doom, who'd usurped the mantle of Sorcerer Supreme of Earth, Doctor Strange became Sorcerer Supreme of Asgard--only to find himself stranded there after Thor's death. The wary denizens of the Nine Realms call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

DOCTOR STRANGE

ANGELA

RHIALLA

VYRBODIN

The dark wizard Vyrbodin unleashed his army of Scythes upon the Nine Realms. Angela and Rhialla joined forces with the Dark Elves and the Angels to take on Vyrbodin's horde while Strange confronted Vyrbodin alone. The mysterious orb Strange found on Svartalfheim appeared and unsettled Vyrbodin as it began to open. In exchange for keeping the orb closed, Vyrbodin surrendered and called off his Scythes. There was another aspect of the deal, but Strange has no memory of what it was...

The Nine Realms are safe for now, but is a greater threat on the horizon?

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DOCTOR STRANGE CREATED BY STAN LEE & STEVE DITKO

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MY NAME IS *STEPHEN STRANGE.*

ON EARTH, I WAS SORCERER SUPREME--UNTIL I WASN'T.

ON ASGARD, I BECAME SORCERER SUPREME AGAIN--

--BUT MY RETURN TO EARTH WAS STYMIED BY THE DEATH OF *THOR* AND THE SEVERING OF MY HOME FROM THE TEN--NOW THE NINE--REALMS.

ANGELA--THOR'S SISTER, AND MY GUIDE THROUGH THE NINE REALMS--IS NOT AT ALL RELUCTANT TO REMIND ME OF MY DUTY...

...AND SHE HAS AN ANNOYING HABIT OF BEING *RIGHT.*

SO I PUT ASIDE THOUGHTS OF HOME AND FOCUS ON MY RESPONSIBILITIES, DELVING FURTHER INTO NEW MAGICS WITH EVERY STEP I TAKE.

IT IS *FASCINATING.* IT IS *EXHILARATING.*

IT IS *TROUBLING.*

THE ELF WIZARD *VYRBODIN* LAUNCHED AN ATTACK AGAINST THE *CHILDREN* OF THE NINE REALMS UNTIL I THREATENED TO OPEN A MYSTERIOUS *ORB--*

--AN ORB I BELIEVE CONTAINS THE SECRET TO HIS *IMMORTALITY.*

UPON SURRENDERING, HE TURNED TO ME... AND THE NEXT FEW MINUTES HAVE BEEN WIPED FROM MY MIND.

HE HAS THE ABILITY TO STEAL MEMORIES, THIS IS TRUE, BUT TO GET PAST MY DEFENSES, HE WOULD HAVE NEEDED MY *PERMISSION.*

SO WHAT DID HE STEAL? AND WHY DID I ALLOW IT?

AND WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH A *THREAT* I FEEL IS LOOMING ON THE HORIZON?

TROUBLING INDEED.

BUT THESE ARE TROUBLING TIMES. MAGIC USERS ARE BEING KILLED ACROSS THE REALMS.

A MAGICIAN ON VANAHEIM. A SKALD ON NIDAVELLIR. A WIZARD ON MUSPELHEIM.

THE WIZARD, AT LEAST, HAD A RUN-IN WITH THE *SEVEN SORCERERS OF MUNDARAA,* SO AT LAST WE HAVE WHAT MIGHT BE A CLUE, WHICH LEADS US TO--

JOTUNHEIM.

I TOLD YOU THAT YOU WOULD NOT NEED ALL THOSE FURS.

THIS IS THE LAND OF THE *FROST GIANTS.* I THOUGHT IT'D BE...*FROSTIER.*

A FIRE DEMON RULES HERE NOW, AS A FROST WITCH RULES MUSPELHEIM.* CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE.

*SEE *MORTAL THOR #8!*

SUCH IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

FROST GIANTS ARE NOT KNOWN FOR THEIR MAGIC, AND SO THE SEVEN SORCERERS OF MUNDARAA ARE OUTLIERS.

OR, AT LEAST...

...THEY *WERE.*

THESE WOUNDS ARE FRESH. MINUTES OLD.

THIS ONE WROTE SOMETHING IN HIS OWN BLOOD.

"DOWNFALL."

IS THAT A PREDICTION OR A NAME?

DOES IT MATTER?

IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO DO THIS, AND YET THE GIANTS DID NOT EVEN HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE DEFENSE.

THIS "DOWNFALL" IS... IMPRESSIVE.

A PORTAL OPENED HERE.

NOT A ***PORTAL***, EXACTLY, BUT...SOMETHING. A PATHWAY? SOME KIND OF TUNNEL I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

NOT MAGICAL. NOT TECHNOLOGICAL. BIOLOGICAL MAYBE? IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

IT'S STILL HERE, CLOSING RAPIDLY, BUT IF I FIND IT IN TIME, MAYBE I CAN FORCE IT TO--

--REOPEN.

ANGELA! *QUICKLY!*

NICELY DONE, STRANGE. LET US VISIT JUSTICE UPON THIS KILLER WHO SO GLEEFULLY--

STRANGE?

HE LEFT ME HERE.

I CANNOT BELIEVE HE LEFT ME HERE.

UP AHEAD, THE LIGHT SHIFTS AND I SEE THE FIRST SHADOWS OF MY DESTINATION.

IS THAT...? COULD IT BE...?

IT *IS.*

MIDGARD. EARTH. THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM. *HOME.*

THE SCARLET WITCH?!

STRANGE?!

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR *MONTHS!*

THIS SHOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE. I'VE TRIED EVERY TELEPORTATION METHOD KNOWN TO MAGIC AND NONE HAVE WORKED.

I *SHOULD NOT* BE HERE RIGHT--

IS THAT MY *CLOAK?*

I'M SORCERER SUPREME NOW. A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE.

YOU? WHAT ABOUT *DOOM?*

DOOM'S BEEN HANDLED, STEPHEN. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM ANYMORE.

DOOM'S BEEN... HANDLED?

ARE YOU OKAY?

YES, OF COURSE. I'VE-- I'VE OBVIOUSLY MISSED A *LOT.*

I'M GLAD IT'S YOU, WANDA. EARTH COULDN'T BE IN BETTER HANDS.

THANK YOU, STEPHEN. TRULY.

BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO *THIS* DELIGHTFUL FELLOW MIGHT BE?

BY THE VISHANTI--

--WHAT MANNER OF DEMON IS *THIS?*

I WAS HOPING YOU COULD TELL ME. HE APPEARED A FEW MINUTES BEFORE YOU DID. I CAUGHT HIM IN A TEMPORAL FIELD, BUT--

--HE'S STRONG.

HE'S ALMOST BROKEN FREE.

I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. ***DOWNFALL***, MAYBE. THAT'S AS GOOD A NAME AS ANY.

HE'S MY MAIN SUSPECT IN THE MURDERS OF OVER A DOZEN POWERFUL SORCERERS.

THE TEMPORAL FIELD IS DEGRADING AROUND HIM. THE EFFECT HE'S HAVING ON IT IS ASTONISHING.

THE GATE YOU CAME THROUGH--IT'S ALREADY COLLAPSED BUT--

I KNOW. I'VE BEEN ON ASGARD FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS, BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT OVER ***THERE*** EITHER.

ASGARD?

STEPHEN?

I SENSED YOUR PRESENCE. I CAME HERE AS SOON AS--

I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS.

CLEA, I... I HARDLY KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.

I RETREATED TO ASGARD TO REBUILD MY POWER. I TORE MY LIFE ASUNDER IN ORDER TO TAKE DOWN DOOM, BUT YOU... YOU ALL DID IT ***WITHOUT*** ME.

ALL THAT SACRIFICE...THAT STRUGGLE...

WHEN I WAS A SURGEON, I WAS ARROGANT TO THE POINT OF ***NARCISSISM.***

I HONESTLY DON'T THINK I'VE ***CHANGED*** ALL THAT MUCH.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

ASGARD?

SORRY, YES.

I BECAME SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO DOOM, BUT THOR'S DEATH SEVERED EARTH FROM THE OTHER REALMS AND I'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET BACK EVER SINCE.

BACK HOME. BACK TO ***YOU.***

YOU'VE BEEN TRAPPED IN ***NORSE MYTHOLOGY?*** ***THAT'S*** YOUR EXCUSE?

NORSE MYTH--?

AH.

THOR ISN'T ***REAL*** TO YOU, IS HE? REALITY HAS BEEN ALTERED.

WANDA, AS SORCERER SUPREME, THIS FALLS UNDER YOUR JURISDICTION--NOT TO MENTION YOUR ***WHEELHOUSE.***

MAYBE SO, STEPHEN--BUT I BELIEVE WE HAVE MORE PRESSING MATTERS. MY TEMPORAL FIELD IS ABOUT TO FAIL IN THREE, TWO, ONE...

GREETINGS, VISITOR.

I AM THE ***SCARLET WITCH***, SORCERER SUPREME OF EARTH. BESIDE ME IS ***CLEA***, SORCERER SUPREME OF THE DARK DIMENSION--

--AND ***DOCTOR STRANGE***, SORCERER SUPREME OF A MADE-UP LAND OF VIKING FAIRY TALES.

WHO MIGHT ***YOU*** BE?

NO RESPONSE? ***CAN*** YOU RESPOND? CAN YOU ***TALK?***

YOU'VE HURT MAGIC USERS, HAVEN'T YOU? KILLED THEM?

WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT. YOU CAN SURRENDER.

NO.

HIS FISTS *SHATTER* MY DEFENSIVE SHIELD.

IT IS AS IF MAGIC ITSELF *RECOILS* FROM HIS PRESENCE.

CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK!

CHAINS OF KRAKKAN!

UNBREAKABLE ROPES OF RAVKINNXR!

I HAVE FOUGHT ENEMIES LIKE THIS DOWNFALL BEFORE-- WE ALL HAVE.

VICTORY IS SIMPLY A CASE OF IDENTIFYING AND OVERWHELMING HIS VULNERABILITIES BEFORE HE OVERWHELMS *OURS.*

THANKFULLY, I HAVE TWO OF THE MOST POWERFUL BEINGS IN EXISTENCE BY MY SIDE, WHILE HE--

UNFF!

YOU MADE A MISTAKE TODAY, DOWNFALL.

TO BATTLE *ONE OF US* IS FOLLY. BUT *ALL OF US?*

THAT'S DOWNRIGHT *IRRESPONSIBLE.*

WHAK

DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, MY LOVE, BUT IF HE'S HUNTING MAGIC USERS ACROSS DIMENSIONS--

--WHY DIDN'T HE JUST KILL *YOU* BEFORE BRINGING THE FIGHT TO *US?*

HOW RUDE.

FLAMES OF FALTINE!

JUDGING BY THE PORTALS HE USES, I DON'T THINK THIS GENTLEMAN VIEWS TRANS-REALM TRAVEL AS AN ISSUE.

I THINK HE TARGETS WHOMEVER POPS UP ON HIS RADAR.

I AM NOT LOVING OUR OPPONENT'S INABILITY TO FALL OVER.

HIS CELLS ARE MADE UP OF SOMETHING I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. WHEN HE'S UNCONSCIOUS, WE SHOULD STUDY HIM PROPERLY.

BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST...

WANDA DOESN'T WANT TO SAY IT AND CLEA WOULD NEVER ADMIT IT, BUT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO BEAT HIM. NOT LIKE THIS.

HE IS NOT ***IMPERVIOUS*** TO MAGIC--HE IS SIMPLY RESISTANT TO IT. BUT ***RESISTANCE,*** LIKE ARMOR, CAN BE ***BREACHED.***

YOU JUST NEED THE RIGHT KIND OF ***ANGLE*** AND THE RIGHT KIND OF ***BLADE.***

ENTER ***LORD STRANGE.***

WHAT A CURIOUS FELLOW YOU ARE!

...STEPHEN?

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS ***PARTICULAR*** BLADE IS THE VERSION OF MYSELF I CREATED TO DEAL WITH THE MORE... ***UNCONTROLLABLE*** MAGICS.

THE SCARLET WITCH IS CORRECT-- YOUR CELLS ARE QUITE UNIQUE, AREN'T THEY? YOUR ENTIRE BEING IS SOMETHING ***SPARKLING*** AND ***NEW.***

THIS ISN'T EVEN YOUR FINAL FORM, IS IT? YOU'RE STILL GETTING STRONGER. OH MY. OH ***MY.***

IF SOMETHING ***UNTOWARD*** WERE TO HAPPEN AND YOU RUPTURED, COULD I PLAY WITH YOUR INSIDES? PLEASE?

GRAARGHHH!

OH, DON'T BE SUCH A BABY!

ANYONE WOULD THINK I WAS KILLING YOU!

YOU'RE NOT ***MY*** STEPHEN.

YOU'RE AS PURE A CONDUIT OF MAGIC AS I'VE EVER SEEN. PERHAPS MORE SO.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE.

SUCH IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

YOU DON'T WANT TO KILL HIM, STEPHEN. I KNOW YOU DON'T.

OF COURSE.

HIS DEFENSES ARE WEAKENED. WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

WAIT! THE PORTAL--!

HURRY! BEFORE IT *CLOSES!*

NO! DON'T GO!

NOT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE TRAPPED IN A REALM YOU DON'T EVEN BELIEVE IN.

STEPHEN? IS THAT YOU?

YEAH, SORRY ABOUT THAT...

THAT IS A DANGEROUS GAME YOU'RE PLAYING.

I'M AWARE.

WANDA, CAN YOU KEEP THE PORTAL OPEN?

BARELY. IT--IT'S ABOUT TO COLLAPSE.

YOU'RE NOT STAYING.

LET IT. WE'LL BE READY FOR HIM IF HE EVER COMES BACK.

I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES ON ASGARD AND THROUGHOUT THE NINE REALMS.

I WANT TO STAY. THERE IS ***NOTHING*** I WANT MORE. I MISS YOU WITH EVERY HEARTBEAT. BUT THERE'S SOMETHING COMING. SOMETHING I HAVE TO FACE.

I--I CAN'T COME WITH YOU. MY RESPONSIBILITIES--

--ARE *OVERWHELMING.* I KNOW.

I'LL FIND MY WAY BACK TO YOU, CLEA.

I'LL COME HOME. KNOW THIS. BELIEVE THIS.

I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU TOO.

WHEN I EMERGE, DOWNFALL IS GONE.

AND I AM ALONE.

HEVEN.

ANGELA.

YOU LOOK... *ANNOYED.* HAS THE MORTAL BEEN VEXING AGAIN?

THE MORTAL IS NOTHING *BUT* VEXING, RHIALLA. HE LEFT ME ON JOTUNHEIM, AND WHEN NEXT I SEE HIM...

ANYWAY. *YOU* LOOK *TIRED.* HAVE YOU BEEN IN BATTLE?

I WOULD SEVER MY *SWORD HAND* FOR BATTLE. NO, ANGELA, MY WEARINESS COMES NOT FROM COMBAT BUT FROM COLUMNS.

COLUMNS?

COLUMNS AND CATEGORIES AND LEDGERS. THE HIEROPHANTS NEED TO BE TAKEN THROUGH MY MOTHER'S BOOKS WHILE WE SEARCH FOR A NEW QUEEN.

HEVEN MUST STILL BE MANAGED.

AND *YOU* MUST OVERSEE IT? THE ANGELS HAVEN'T EVEN *ACCEPTED YOU* AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.

AND WITH GOOD REASON, DESPITE THE ARGUMENTS THAT *GALLIPHERON* MAKES ON MY BEHALF. I *KILLED* THE ANCHORITES. I SLAUGHTERED THEM WHILE THEY PRAYED.

THAT WAS NOT *YOU.* THAT WAS VYRBODIN'S *DARK DAUGHTER,* AND SHE WAS POWERLESS TO DISOBEY.

SPEAKING OF THAT FOUL PSYCHOPATH, YOU SEEM TO BE MARCHING TOWARD HIS CELL.

COME WITH ME. HEAR MY PLAN.

I HAVE HEARD YOUR PLAN. I THOUGHT I CONVINCED YOU TO SEE SENSE.

CLEARLY, YOU'RE NOT AS PERSUASIVE AS YOU THINK.

YOUR *SCYTHES* HOVER IN THE SKIES OF THE NINE REALMS, VYRBODIN-- EMPTY VESSELS WITHOUT THOUGHT NOR EMOTION. *LIVING BEINGS*, NONETHELESS.

AND YOU WANT ME TO CHANNEL THEIR ESSENCE INTO THE REMAINS OF YOUR ANCHORITES? TO BREATHE *LIFE* INTO THE *LIFELESS?*

WHY WOULD I DO THIS FOR YOU? WHY UNDO THE *ONE VICTORY* OF MY SORRY CAMPAIGN OF VENGEANCE?

WHAT DO I GET OUT OF IT?

WHAT DO YOU *WANT?*

RHIALLA--

WHAT DO YOU *WANT*, VYRBODIN?

I HAVE WASTED EONS ON ANGER AND HATRED. I'M OLD AND I'M TIRED AND I WANT TO MAKE AMENDS.

THERE IS A THREAT COMING. A DANGER YOU HAVE NEVER FACED. A DANGER YOU WILL NEVER DEFEAT, NOT WITHOUT *MY* HELP.

YOUR STRENGTH WILL NOT BE ENOUGH. YOUR TECHNOLOGY. YOUR MAGIC. IT IS COMING, AND IT WILL CRUSH US ALL AND NOT EVEN NOTICE.

WHAT IS THIS THREAT? GIVE US A *NAME*, DAMN YOU.

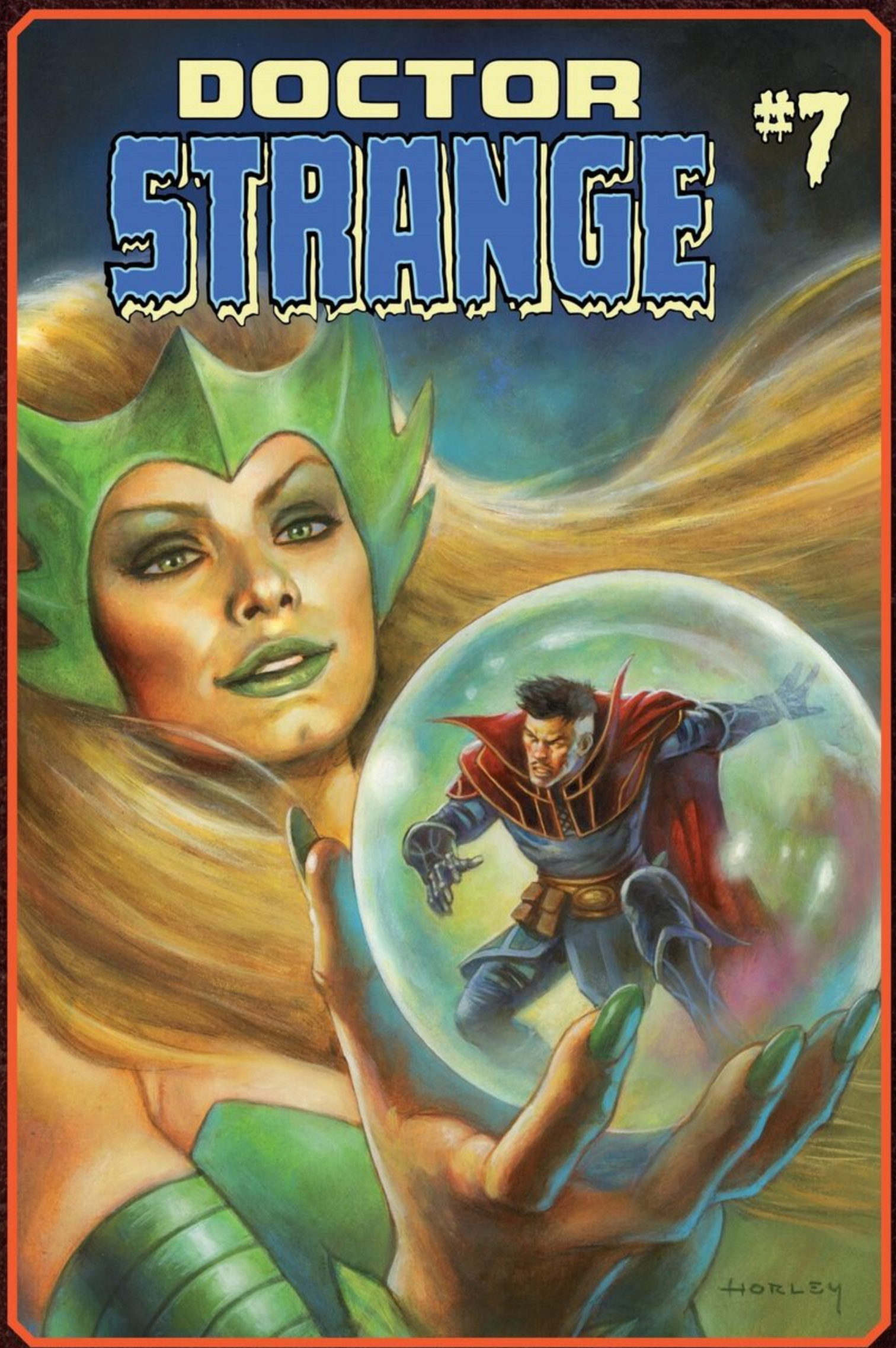
IT IS CALLED *ATHO-TET*...

...AND IT IS THE END OF ALL THINGS.

TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT

Doctor Strange and Angela travel to Asgard to find out more about the mysterious all-powerful entity Downfall but discover Asgard's library has been stripped bare by none other than the Enchantress, who harbors more secrets than answers...



THE MAGIC CONTINUES THIS MONTH IN...

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